

The issue of "extended length" has been amended, as believed to be implied by the rejection, that the length is extended to provide a ring shape or slit shape on the surface to be illuminated or detected. As that term has been replaced or qualified in all instances with the specific geometric shapes recited, the rejection has been overcome.

Certain minor editorial amendments have been made to improve the quality of the claims. Additionally, 'means-plus-function' limitations have been eliminated or minimized to improve the scope of the claims. For example, rather than reciting "means for illuminating," the claim recites "illuminator" to prevent an excessively narrow interpretation of the claims in view of changes in the law since the original drafting of the claims. The same amending has been done with "sensor" and "signaler." As the specification clearly shows that the system senses, there is inherently a concept of a sensor (and an embodiment thereof) disclosed, and similarly a signaler disclosed. All issues raised in the rejection relating to a lack of antecedent basis have also been corrected by amendment, so each of those issues has been removed by the amendment.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney at (952) 832.9090 to facilitate prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,
EDWARD W. STARK
By their Representatives,
Mark A. Litman & Associates, P.A.
York Business Center

Suite 205
3209 W. 76th Street
Edina, MN 55435
(952) 832.9090

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By *Mark A. Litman*
Mark A. Litman
Reg. No. 26,390

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to Assistant Commissioner of Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231 on March 12, 2000.

Name

Mark A. Litman
Signature